

NOVEMBER, 1979

NEWS

Dear Members,

As a member of your Executive it is obvious that as far as they are concerned the momentum for the Blackpool Conference is rapidly building up, even though on paper it is still a few months before the event. I have no doubt this feeling will be communicated to yourselves when you read the Schedule included with this issue. We are hoping for a record turnout; as you will see from Bob Marsden's letter, there is no danger at all in travelling north - the natives are friendly and passports are not required.

Please note that the closing date for membership to enter the members' classes is 6th January, 1980. There is plenty of accommodation in Blackpool and once again let me remind you that the Conference Hotel is the Imperial. This is a Four-Star Hotel with all the facilities and is the venue for our Friday night get-together. The terms are £15 per person per day bed and breakfast. This is a special reduced rate to members and to take advantage of this you must book through our Social Secretary, Len Drysdale, 7 Richmondfield Drive, Barwick in Elmet, Nr. Leeds. Book now as this opportunity may not be available after 31st January, 1980.

JUDGES' STEWARDS

A letter to members from Alan Briggs, your Convener of Judges.

"May I ask, through N.A.V.O., for any members who will be attending the National at Blackpool in March, 1980, that we shall be requiring the usual 100 or so Judges' Stewards, and will members give some preliminary thought to this and, if interested, write to me at my home address, which is still - 4 Suffolk Avenue, Carlton Grange, Batley, West Yorks, WF17 7AN.

No immediate acknowledgment will be given, but interested members will be informed nearer the date of arrangements. I would like to stress to any who are thinking of taking their Guild exam. that the National is still the best Show for gaining experience and stewarding along with a National Judge for either Wine or Beer.

This letter will appear also in a News-letter nearer the Show date but in the meantime, it is never too early to start planning one's career as a Steward or Judge and also to be top of the list for the National Show. I look forward to some replies, please, please, please."

ALAN BRIGGS,

Convener of Judges

Membership

Membership fees for year 1979/80 are due and our membership Secretary Jim Chettle, 45 Oak Tree Drive, Gedling, Notts., will be pleased to receive your subs. Do not leave it too late.

GENERAL STEWARDS

As in previous years, we rely very heavily upon volunteers to assist in the general stewarding at Blackpool, without their most valuable help the Show could not go ahead. This is an appeal to everyone to rally around and volunteer to help. Will you please write to Maurice Matthews, 1 Meadow Way, Ringwood, Hants, BM24 1RY, stating when you are likely to be available to help. By doing so you will help your Executive and at the same time you will have the pleasure of becoming part of the organisation and the satisfaction of a job well done.

PENDANTS

Our supplies officer, Norman Chiverton, 5 Healey Close, Brownsover, Rugby, CV21 1NE, still has a number of sterling silver ladies' pendants for sale at £5 plus 15p postage. Norman tells me that these are an absolute bargain at this price as due to the rise in the price of silver the same pendant at today's prices would be nearer £10. So order quickly while stocks last. A nice present for your wife or someone else's.

THE SCHEDULE

First I must apologise on behalf of the Executive to the maltsters, EDME PRODUCTS. For many years now they have been a regular advertiser in our Schedule and once again they forwarded an advert for the present Schedule. Unfortunately the printer omitted it from the Schedule. We very much regret this but, unfortunately, the Schedules were printed before the omission was discovered and it was too late to rectify matters. Our humble apologies to EDME PRODUCTS, who have been stout supporters of the National for many years.

The following printers' errors have also been made. Will you please read the following notes carefully and amend your Schedule accordingly:

Page 25 should read:

My N.A.W.B. Membership is.....

✓ A separate form MUST be used by each exhibitor. Bulk entries on one form from Associations CANNOT be accepted. Exhibitors entering divided classes, 11, 12, 26 and 28 may enter only ONE section of each of these classes. 1 or 2 sections may be entered in classes 13 to 16 inclusive. See rule 9.

i.e. Class 10 deleted. Class 25 becomes Class 26 and class 27 now reads 28

✓ Under Entry fee at bottom of page 25, Entry fee enclosed @ £1 should read Class 32 and 33. (instead of Class 32 and 35).

Sorry about this printers' error.

WINE ASSESSMENT AT BLACKPOOL

As a new idea we are asking members to bring a bottle of their wine along to Blackpool, and on the Saturday afternoon a panel chaired by our President, Les Stagg, will assess the wine. The panel will consist of Past Presidents of N.A.W.B. Anyone who hands over a bottle for assessment must be prepared to surrender the whole of the contents: the idea being that two persons from the panel will assess the wine and the remainder will be shared out amongst the audience to taste. We will try to assess as many bottles as possible and that is why we are only asking two from the panel to taste each bottle and this way save time.

I think at this time I should echo a word of warning to some winemakers: this is only a personal opinion, but for a long time now it has been my experience when talking to winemakers a certain fallacy seems to be very prevalent. This is that some wine-makers expect that if they offer a wine to a number of qualified judges then the comments of those judges should be absolutely similar and if there is any divergence of opinion then some of the judges must be incompetent. This is a view that I strongly disagree with. I am, of course, talking of degrees of excellence and I am not suggesting that if a judge happens to be the odd one out and praises a wine that is acetified that this is acceptable. But qualities of body, finesse, fruitiness, style, etc., can quite legitimately bring forth comments of diverging views which although differing must be recognised as quite acceptable. Readers of the Commercial wine magazine "Decanter" will know what I mean. On many occasions they have four Masters of Wine assessing a number of wines and their comments on these wines often vary to quite a large degree. This is to be expected within certain limits as it is all a matter of personal taste.

EXECUTIVE RETIREMENT

Mrs. Audrey Newton was elected to the Executive at the last A.G.M. as the Circle representative, and agreed to take over the post of Entries Secretary. Unfortunately, for domestic and travel reasons, she has resigned from the Executive.

At very short notice, Norman Chiverton our supplies Officer has volunteered to take on this very important post in addition to his job as Supplies Officer. We have

co-opted his wife, Sarah Chiverton, as Circle representative and she will no doubt be helping Norman with his double task. Our thanks to them both.

NATIONAL GUILD OF WINE AND BEER JUDGES. A.G.M.

Philip Delmon was unable to seek re-election due to his heavy business commitments. With one place to fill to complete the committee, volunteers were requested to put up for election. Three people were added to the retiring committee and a vote took place. Mrs. Audrey Newton has now joined the rest of the Executive who were re-elected. Following the Election of the Executive a committee meeting took place to elect the Officers.

There was no change in the Executive and Mr. Ted Adcock is still Chairman with Dr. Philip Dransfield Vice Chairman and Mr. Vic Goffin, Hon. Sec. Mr. Ivor Morgan is still Treasurer and ready to collect Subs from all Member Judges. The Subscriptions have now risen to £5 per annum.

FEDERATION SHOWS

The Chiltern and Mid Thames Federation was well attended and had about 800 bottles. The Yorkshire Federation held their 11th annual Show at Scarborough in June. 1670 bottles were entered and the Master Winemaker was Kelvin Chapman of Wakefield Circle. Their winner of the Wine Queen was Wendy Bateson of Chantry Circle. Roy Ekins gave a talk on Exotic Ingredients, which was well received.

During the above weekend the Association of Wine and Beermakers Federation held their meeting and discussion took place on a change of title.

I attended the Midland Federation Show in October and had the usual great time but sadly this year was a sad occasion as their Treasurer, Iris Chambers, passed away a couple of weeks before the event. Our deepest sympathy goes out to her husband, Claude, the President of the Midland Fed. in his sad loss. Iris - a person of unbelievable courage - has, with Claude, been the backbone of the Midlands Fed. since its inception and despite failing health in latter years still carried on and did a wonderful job. Iris will be sadly missed by all.

The North West annual Comp. and Show the week following the Midlands was a resounding success, drawing visitors from all over the country. The Fancy Dress on the Friday night was better than ever. 2500 bottles were judged on the Saturday and on the Sunday morning, Ron Williams of Aberdare kept us all amused and informed with his talk on 'Keeping your Balance'. A great weekend.

A note for next year: on 13th May, 1980, Middlesex Fed. are holding a Seminar at Hounslow, Middlesex, - all further information from Reg Budge.

For information re Association of Wine and Beermakers Association, please contact the Secty., Dave Pulley, 01-464.7173.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Members,

My second Chairman's Letter! How quickly the time goes by, but that is because we are so busy.

There appears to be more Wine Clubs, and more meetings, then the Federations are growing and the Weekends come around quickly from one Show to another.

No! I am not having a grumble - a little tired maybe - but enjoying every minute. As a friend of mine keeps saying "This is what it is all about".

We left "Brighton '79" having enjoyed the Weekend, despite getting lost at times in such a beautiful but vast building. It cost us more than we anticipated, as we had to pay corkage for a number of 'gatecrashers' on the Friday evening - but that is all behind us now and we must only look ahead to this year's Twenty Second Conference at Blackpool. Again we met with 'Corkage' difficulties, for we are expected to pay 'per bottle' at the rate of £1 per bottle. All that we can suggest is to purchase 5-litre bottles at this rate. Thanks to my Committee - we have managed to only pay corkage on the 'Winemaker' attending.

Anyway, Blackpool is looking forward to our Weekend as much as we are, and it's our first one in this locality. The Imperial Hotel has housed many a famous person, but never a Master Winemaker or Master Beermaker. It is a Four-Star Hotel and we

are fortunate that Len Drysdale has a smooth Yorkshire tongue and arranged a very special price for us. Incidentally, it is open to everyone on the Friday night whether resident or not. We will select our 1980 Wine Queen at 10.0 p.m. in the Ballroom of the Hotel. Our thanks go to our present Wine Queen who has attended a few functions, including North West Federation. The difficulty still remains that the cost of attending some functions is a little too expensive, so one has to consider the distance involved.

At this point I would like to express my thanks to my committee. Everyone has done a good job. One or two have had a job I would not envy - such as Len Drysdale when he had to cancel the N.A.W.B. Dinner at the Meriden Hotel due to lack of support. Again that smooth Yorkshire tongue got us out of trouble. Norman Chiverton has helped us, not only with the job of Supplies, Schedule, and General Dogsboddy - but has taken on the task of Entries Secretary. I have named but two - but we are a team.

After many years on Committee we hope our President, Les Stagg, and his wife, Freda, will enjoy 'coming north' to Blackpool. Les will be Chairman of a very prominent Panel. For the first time we are able to present a "President's Seminar", and we hope you will all take advantage of the stage of knowledge from all the experts. Everything is going our way for a very enjoyable weekend in Blackpool, and I look forward to meeting and sharing it with you.

May I wish you and all your families and friends a very Happy Xmas and Prosperous New Year. My Committee join me in wishing you all many years of happy winemaking, and of course drinking.

Sincerely,

SYBIL HILL

VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From E.A.W. Roycroft - 44 Newell Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 9EB.

"Dear Ken,

Stan Baker sent me a copy of his letter to you about my comments in May, 1979 NAVO. I have just found time to answer. It appears to me that Stan misunderstood; at least partially; my comments. They were solely concerned with dryness/sweetness and the impossibility of defining a dry (less sweet than) wine, without the wine's purpose being stated (Table or Dessert, or etc.) It followed that medium dry or medium sweet was an impossibility in a class by ingredient only. Of course there are commercial 'medium' wines but it does not alter the above statement. For instance, commercial 'medium dry' range from the imperceptibly sweet to the really sweet (and medium sweet cover practically the same range), depending on the purpose of the wine. That some people drink them for purposes other than their intended only indicates lack of appreciation/palate. Some confusion is also caused because cheap wines are blended to attract the general public with uninitiated taste and labeled to attract sales.

If the definition of wine types is required, the enclosed synopsis gives them with reasons for the type characteristics. Copyright is involved but you may publish if you wish. All the Best,

Roy"

Letter from E. P. Darry, 9 Maines Farm Road, Upper Beeding, W. Sussex, BNV. 3TH.

Dear Mr. Hill,

As a member of about a year's time, I feel it could be worth writing some comments arising from your May and August issues of News and Views.

First, I am in agreement with Mr. Roycroft in general about the classification of wines. To enter a wine, in, e.g., a 'Fruit, Sweet' Class is almost without meaning; one cannot tell what type of wine is required at all. It could be anything from a medium sweet to a full dessert, and since any could be entered, it must make the judges' work one of hit and miss. Let us, as he suggests, classify by purpose, or style. The above also implies that judges should be familiar with commercial classes. Are they now? I had at the Brighton Show a Sweet Red grape wine (my own home-grown grapes) which I entered under a Fruit Class sub-division for any other fruit not specifically

mentioned in that general class. Perhaps the judges did not recognise a good grape wine - or it didn't occur to them that grape came within the "any other" group, and threw it out as not in its proper class? Further, as a postscript, that bottle disappeared from the shelves - did someone really like it? Within two months that same wine won a Second at the Sussex Federation Show, so it was a good wine. (Their standard is high).

That brings me to the point of Regional Federations. They do a good job, and in many respects like socials, shows of higher standard than most Clubs, trips and so on are, and must be, more useful than N.A.W.B., which is, and largely confined, to its Annual event. However, the Annual N.A.W.B. Competition is too large, in my opinion, and must make the judging very difficult. It has been said that an Award at a Federation Show should be won before entering for the N.A.W.B. I do not mean that this applies to the actual same wine entered, but is a qualification or earnest of competence before entering the N.A.W.B. Competition. Details can be agreed, such as what awards are accepted, and how to treat overseas entries. It's time the N.A.W.B. resolved their differences and came together, now that there are Regional Federations, and not just the N.A.W.B., which should largely confine itself to maintenance of standards, appointment of National Judges, and the Annual Conference and Show, leaving the Federations to hold their competitions, and run social events, which they can do much more easily having more members within a reasonable distance.

Yours sincerely,

E. P. Darry

(Re your last paragraph, I must point out that N.A.W.B. do not appoint National Judges - they make use of their services. The appointment of these Judges is quite rightly the prerogative of their own National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges.

K.H., Editor)

Letter from Bob Marsdon, 117, Haig Road, Hillingdon, Middlesex, UB8 3EQ.

Dear Ken,

It was whilst pondering on how to book a hotel at Blackpool, for next year's "National" that I saw the "North West Federations" Conference, listed under Forthcoming Events in the May edition of "News and Views". I put the idea to the Wembley Guild that we should go to Southport for the North West's weekend, and make a trip into Blackpool to sort out accommodation for next year's "National". Though I say it myself, it turned out to be a wonderful decision. A dozen of us hit the road for Southport, and had a truly magnificent weekend with the wine and beer makers of the North West of England.

I would, through the pages of "News and Views", like to thank all our friends who made us welcome with their hospitality at Southport. I hope we all meet again at Blackpool next March, and again at Southport in October.

Incidentally, we did book our hotel in the vicinity of the Winter Gardens, but it did seem further by road from Southport to Blackpool than it looked on the map.

Yours fraternally in winemaking,

Bob Marsdon (Wembley P.R.O.)

(Thanks, Bob. I'm glad that you enjoyed your weekend at Southport. Now that you have braved the Customs Control at Watford, coming up to Blackpool for the "National" will be child's play. K.H., Editor)

Letter from E.A.W. Roycroft, 44 Newell Road, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, HP3 9EB

Dear Ken,

As my earlier letter awoke some of the 'dead', perhaps I can evoke more reaction by replying to my critics and others, though I must emphasise one point that any readers of this should clearly understand:

Whatever wine a person makes; whatever it is called; for whatever purpose it is drunk, is a matter of personal choice. If vintage port with Lemon Sole gives pleasure, then so be it, for the first and foremost reason for making wine is for personal pleasure. BUT!! if wine is entered into a competition then it should be to a standard and not personal preference. This standard is the standard set for commercial wines by discerning drinkers, over the centuries - wines by their acceptability for purpose.

Without a standard (purpose) a class can be a heterogeneous conglomerate (as many are now) that cannot be properly judged so that the final awards may have to be made by the judges likes and dislikes because there is nothing else by which to resolve the tangle. Hence complaints against the judges when Show Schedules should be blamed.

It is a standard (purpose) for classes, and thereby a standard for judging with which my comments are concerned. Not with the personal drinking, though those with wine sense would drink by the same standards.

I am sympathetic towards the Schedule Committee's reply and appreciate their position. It is time the N.G.W.B.J. up-dated their handbook to classes by purpose and despite what is said on page 27, I maintain it is not a major alteration but a logical adjustment as I first suggested many years ago and have repeated on occasions since. The original reply was that winemakers were generally not ready for it then. That was getting on for 20 years ago, so within all reason they should be ready now. It has been started with some classes so why should it not be expanded now - and why not by N.A.W.B.(A)? Why not be the leaders and not the following sheep? The argument re new competitors is not fully valid (as I think the Schedule Committee appreciated) because there could be a few classes for novices /new competitors - by ingredient if necessary - and if they really wanted to enter competitions they would quickly learn what the rest of the schedule meant. To do nothing; either AWNGJ or NAWB(A) or both; is tantamount to saying 'Amateur winemakers are ignorant about their wines and want to remain ignorant'.

(You have my answer to Stan Baker's letter)

Dear Bob (Marsdon) put a white wine in a Port style class and I would welcome it provided it had the characteristics of a port and was not just a sweet wine. And a pale wine in a Sweet Sherry class should gain a point rather than lose it because it is more difficult to make than a dark brown. Even red should be accepted, provided it had sherry characteristics, but you are unlikely to get one because of the oxidation. Colour is not a criterion for either of these two wines, unless a particular type of Sherry was specified in the Schedule. The question re sweet Madiera is more doggy. If the judge knows Madieras, and there is no reason why they all should, each wine will be first assessed as Bual or Malmsey and then judged accordingly (there are differences other than sweetness as you obviously appreciate) but it would be more sensible for the Show Schedule to state which type.

Your reply, Ken, to Mr. Scholes' letter is correct. As far as is known, we sense acidity by pH and there is no constant relationship between pH and total acidity (titration) due to buffers. Though our assessment of acidity is by pH it can be influenced by other factors amongst them sweetness. Also our sense of sweetness is affected by other factors and one of them is the type of sugar. Thus the measurement of total acidity and sugar content (particularly if by hydrometer) do not directly indicate palate assessment. Do not misunderstand this to mean Mr. Scholes' kit is worthless. It can be of very considerable help in repeatedly making good wine but it is not the "be all and end all". What this explanation means in simple words is "Do not be surprised if Palate assessment of two wines differ as to acidity/sweetness when the total acid and sugar contents are the same for both. A possible reason why a judges opinions varied.

In reply to Denis Banfield's letter, the universal definition of an aperitif is a pre-prandial drink taken as an appetiser* Despite what is in the Judges' Handbook, and the fact that some definitely sweet commercial wines are referred to as sweet aperitif ** (marketed for the relatively recent rise in numbers of wine drinkers with no wine knowledge and indiscriminate palates) an aperitif as an appetiser cannot have definite sweetness. It is not just a question of wine but a biological fact that sweetness is satiating; the absolute opposite to appetising. So may I therefore ask "Does Mr. Banfield consume his dessert, be it peaches and cream, plum-pudding or other sweetmeat, before his soup? The arguments for not doing so are the same as for an appetiser not having definite sweetness. Aperitif thus have no or barely detectable sweetness and to differentiate between the two they are referred to as Sweet (barely detectable sweetness) and dry (less sweet).

I would not disagree with how most Social wines are made and drank but what is drank for drinking's sake is not a criterion for the Show bench. Also the definition does not cover the many wines that are drank as social. Hence my definition for the Show bench which covers wines from the driest to the sweetest which are not Aperitif, Table, Rosé or Dessert, and should not be accepted in classes for these.

* A cross-section of references: Aperitif.

Oxford Dictionary: Alcoholic appetiser.

A Dictionary of Wines and Spirits & Liqueurs. Andre Simon. "Fairly potent and often bitter drink, taken to stimulate one's appetite before meals."

World atlas of Wine: Hugh Johnson: "Aperitif stimulates the appetite as well as the wits. It is brisk and dry with either a sparkle or tang"

Dictionary of Drinks and Drinking: Oscar A. Mendelsohn. "An appetiser".

** The Technology of Winemaking. Amerine & Cruess.

"The new type of lightly flavoured aperitif type sweet dessert wines have attained marked popularity in the past two years" (USA 1958-60)

"They have obviously been prepared to enlarge the basis of wine sales as cocktails".

World Atlas of Wine Hugh Johnson

...Continuing Aperitif "Cocktails leave the palate unable to appreciate good wine at the table".

That's it.

 All the best to both of you,

 Roy."

(Roy's precious correspondence and this letter is with the National Guild for their comments, so at some future date I hope to receive their reply. I appreciate that it will need quite a deep study by them before they can go into print. K.H., Editor)

Letter from P. Awberry, Forest Lodge, Challock, Ashford, Kent.

Dear Ken,

The August edition of "News and Views" must surely have given you much satisfaction to put to print. The seemingly record number of letters to Editor on such a variety of subject matter bodes well for the future and it is to be hoped that this will set the pattern for many Editions to come.

It is, therefore, with some optimistic expectation of getting into the act that I pen this missive to you - after all, I could have been gathering elderberries, pressing apples, drinking wine or beer, or cutting the lawn, although not necessarily in that order. (Also, it's not often that you get a letter from a member of the National Executive, or is it?)

In your opening remarks you make note of our deliberations regarding our discussions on the standards of levels of tuition given by Amateur Winemaker Tutors. As you know, I have always felt that this is a matter of prime importance. Some time ago I approached a senior of the County Education Committee and broached this very subject with him.

In general, the facts are that the levels of interest in any given subject are reflected in the number of Students who enrol and then attend as possible throughout the Course. The enrolment and Course fees are now set so high that any Student will necessarily continue to expect a high level of tuition, given with the expertise that should be available. Thus taking both points into account, there must, on the part of the tutor, be a combination of both the knowledge of the subject and the ability to put over that subject. This, then, is where specific guidance is so often looked for, and should be given by Local Authority Education personnel(?) It must be remembered, however, that would-be tutors employed by Local Authority are vetted/interviewed prior to their employment with regard to their suitability for a tutorial position.

More recently I read a short report on "Who and Why" attend Adult Education Courses. "Who" attend? a complete cross-section of the populace, with two in five of the students over 45 years old, one in five over 60 years and with several in the 70-80 age group (Obviously, with more people retiring, the proportion of the over 50's and 60's will steadily increase).

"Why" attend? As well as requiring some basic knowledge of the subject, the following answers were all given: 'We need to belong to a group'; 'To laugh'; 'Because we need a new impetus'; 'To talk'; 'To work'; 'To escape the T.V. and the house' (thankfully to escape the T.V. was made easier with the extended T.V. technicians' strike).

Also it was apparent that some wish to attend to ease the pain of losing a close companion and to make new friends. From the foregoing, a Summary that a tutor should (1) Have knowledge; (2) Have the ability to dispense knowledge; (3) Be understanding, tactful and helpful, would seem to provide the essentials for the success of any Class. My recommendation is, therefore, that the setting of strict standards for our tutors

must go along with agreed "Educational Standards and Requirements" and we should approach the Ministry of Education for advice and guidance as necessary.

Finally, Ken, I note one reason you gave regarding the award of the £2 prize for the winning letter in the August "News and Views". I assume that your Northern brand of humour played a part in this remark - or did it?

Cheers,

Peter Awberry"

Thank you to all the writers. I make no apology for again awarding Roy Roycroft the £2 for the winning letter, despite Roy's protests that he did not want it again. His letters are so informative and have created such a lot of interest. Whilst reading Roy's letters the thought struck me, that although to all winemakers of long standing he is a household word, I realised that each year we recruit new members to N.A.W.B. who may not know of Roy's winemaking career. So here is a 'potted history':

He has been winning prizes at the National almost since its inception and has twice been National Master Winemaker. A founder member of the National Guild of Wine and Beer Judges and, what many do not know, a gardener of the very highest quality. I remember in the distant past, along with my wife, Sybil, and two friends, writing a series of Wining and Dining articles in the A.W. (such was my gaul when young!). Most of the dishes were taken from the French cookery school. Roy wrote to me suggesting a meal of pure English cooking and promised to supply all the vegetables and fruit. This he did and the fruit and vegetables that he sent us would have won first prizes in any Garden Show. As you will see from the enclosed leaflet, Roy - in tandem with Cyril Berry - has just written The WINEMAKER'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA which is published by Faber and Faber, Ltd., It will be full of good sense and a recommended 'good buy'.

Roy is also at present engaged in writing another book and in it he has classified the various wine styles. He has very kindly allowed me to print for your benefit his thoughts upon the subject. It is too long to publish in one News Letter so I will spread it over the next few issues. The following are his thoughts upon APERITIFS AND TABLE WINES. I am deeply grateful for Roy's kindness in making these available to you.

WINE CLASSIFICATIONS

by ROY ROYCROFT

APERITIF is universally recognised to be a drink taken before a meal to stimulate the appetite, but what this drink comprises has become corrupted of recent years. There are three ways of spelling the word: aperitif, aperitiv and aperitive; and all are accepted as correct. Yet whichever way it is spelt it comes from the Latin 'apertivus' which means 'tending to open'. Since the 16th century it has been used, and still is used, by the medical profession as a term for aperient. This is not surprising as the origin of many wines and liquors was medicinal. The original aperitifs were a concoction of wine and herbs. Today in France the word is used to mean 'an opening, short pre-prandial drink'. It can be either a mistelle or wine which, when matured, is blended with an infusion of herbs. The wines lack sweetness and are thinnish, clean, and of little flavour, but balanced before the infusion of herbs is added. A mistelle is fresh grape juice with spirit added, or partly fermented grape juice in which the fermentation has been stopped by adding spirit. It is matured, and for aperitif an infusion of herbs is added.

As a drink taken before a meal to stimulate the appetite, an aperitif should be very clean, with a tang of bitterness and tartness, and be dry to very dry. It must be dry, as it is a biochemical fact that a sweet drink does the opposite to stimulating the appetite. Sugar produces a feeling of satisfaction, which is the last thing an aperitif should do. There should also be a noticeable alcohol content which helps stimulate the appetite and digestion.

Today some people drink almost anything from a dry wine to whisky and gin, and corruptly call it an aperitif, causing general confusion to amateurs as to what is an aperitif. It is, therefore, suggested that wines intended to be aperitif should be made very clean, dry, thinnish, and with a tang of bitterness/tartness, either by the use of herbs or from ingredients such as grapefruit which conform to the correct concept. Thinnish oxidised wine of the sherry type, without sweetness and properly balanced with the tang of oxidation could be accepted.

TABLE WINE Table wines are those which are drunk at the table with the first courses of a meal, and for this purpose there are four requirements. Dessert wines are also drunk at table with the last course, as well as afterwards, but are not included under the term Table Wine. Here can be anticipated the question 'Can Table Wines be drunk other than at the table?'. The answer is 'Yes, you can drink any wine at any time if you want to, but it will not be appreciated at its best'. What you drink and when you drink it is a matter for your own personal taste, but if your taste is for table wine drunk socially away from the table, do not try to inflict it on others. Table wines have evolved primarily to be drunk with a meal, not socially, and drunk away from the table are not always palatable to general liking. For instance, the person that likes to drink the driest wines prefers the socially drunk wine to be lower in acid or acid/tannin than those drunk at the table. In other words, the table wine is a specific wine, not just any dry wine.

To revert to the four requirements for table wine: these are:-

To stimulate the digestion and appetite, though you may not be consciously aware of these actions.

To clean the palate.

To be a pleasant accompaniment by being complementary to the food and enhance its quality.

To be drunk in reasonable quantity as a beverage (similar to drinking water with a meal).

and they give clear indication of the necessary general characteristics of table wine.

Any reasonably well-made wine will stimulate the digestion by its very nature, but to stimulate appetite it has to have little or no detectable sweetness because semi-sweet to sweet is satiating. When eating meats cooked to Middle Eastern or Eastern recipes which use honey in the cooking, and more particularly in the sauce, sweeter than normal wines would have to be drunk. This is an exception, and the appetite is not stimulated. Wines lacking some sweetness are unpalatable with these dishes, and water can be preferable to sweet wine.

To clean the palate the wine itself has to be clean and fresh without disorder or guggyness, and it must have a high acid or acid/tannin content. The greasier the accompanying food from animal fat, the greater the required content. Whether acid or acid/tannin, depends on the food with which it is taken. Acid only with fish and white meats; acid tannin with red meats and robust dishes. Rosé wine can be drunk with many foods normally associated with both acid (white) and acid/tannin (red) because it has distinct characteristics between the two. It is a good drink on its own, good for luncheons and picnics, but not so good for drinking with the better food of an excellent dinner. It has more tannin than a white; is soft compared with a red; usually not so high in acid as either, and slightly more sweet than a table wine.

To be a pleasant accompaniment to the food the wine should have no individually lingering flavour, aftertaste or bitterness; nor should the flavour be strong or strident causing masking or mingling with the next mouthful of food and thereby detract from it. Though none of these should linger on the palate, neither should they die suddenly. They should gently fade. Table wines should, therefore, be made with delicate flavoured ingredients or blended to obtain the same result. The delicate flavour plus clean palate will enhance accompanying food, but when selecting for a particular meal the selection

COMMERCIAL WINES WORTH DRINKING

I think that one of the best buys at the moment is a Spanish Rioja from Laymont and Shaw, The Old Chapel Mill Pool, Truro, Cornwall. It is a wine from La Rioja Alta, S.A., and it is the Vina Ardanza, 1973, 5th Year selling at £2.73 per bottle. It is full of fruit and a real bargain at this price.

A tip for all those interested in commercial wines. It is well worth spending a couple of pounds' worth of postage stamps to write away to all the leading wine-merchants for their current price lists. It is surprising how by shopping around you can save as much as £2 or over by this method. It is not just a case of one wine merchant being dearer than the other. One merchant can be low priced on one wine but higher than a competitor on another wine, so shop around and you will save pounds.

On behalf of the Executive, may I wish all wine and beer-makers a Happy and Healthy Xmas and New Year.

Ken Hill,
Editor.

18 Laxton Road,
Hunts Cross,
Liverpool, 25.